News Release

Public Affairs and Corporate Communications Office
Space & Naval Warfare Systems Command
4301 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92110
Telephone: 619-524-3470 Fax: 619-524-3469

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Navy F-9 Communications Satellite Successfully Launched

CAPE CANAVERAL AIR STATION, Fla. – The U.S. Navy's ninth UHF Follow-On Communications satellite was successfully launched into a geo-transfer orbit by an industry and government team here at 3:19 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

A Lockheed Martin Atlas IIA rocket lifts off from Cape Canaveral Air Station at 3:19 a.m. Oct. 20th. The rocket carried the U.S. Navy's UHF Follow-On communications satellite into a geo-transfer orbit. *Photo courtesy Lockheed Martin Commercial Launch Services*.

After several days with intermittent rain showers in the area of the Cape and a launch scrub Monday, the weather cooperated long enough for Lockheed Martin's International Launch Services and the Air Force's 3rd Space Launch Squadron to launch the Atlas IIA rocket from Space Launch Complex 36A here. Monday's launch was scrubbed about 1:55 a.m. when range safety models indicated that upper level winds would blow debris onto Port Canaveral if the rocket had to be destroyed during the first 90 seconds of flight.

Lighting up the night-time sky, the Atlas launch vehicle climbed slowly at first, then accelerated quickly away from the Cape towards the southeast in a streak of light arcing across the sky as the thunderous roar from the two booster and one sustainer engines shook the surrounding area.

The Block III UHF Follow-On Communications Satellite is the ninth of ten Hughes Space and Communications Company HS-601 models for the U.S. Defense Department. Satellites eight through ten are equipped with Ultra High Frequency, Extremely High Frequency and Global Broadcast Service wideband communications payloads.

The Atlas rocket and Centaur upper stage pushed the Navy's 7,066-pound satellite into an intermediate transfer orbit of 13,966.8 nautical miles apogee, 154.5 nautical miles perigee and an inclination of 27.0 degrees (based on the Centaur guidance system calculations).

The Navy's Program Executive Office for Space, Communications, and Sensors (located in San Diego) contracted with Hughes Space and Communications Company to build the UHF Follow-On Communication's Satellites in a $1.9 billion program (over 10 launches). Hughes, in turn, contracted with Lockheed Martin Commercial Launch Services for the lift to orbit. The U.S. Navy takes possession of the satellite once it is checked out and placed in its operating geo-stationary orbit location.

The UHF Follow-On communications satellite constellation is utilized to satisfy the Department of Defense requirements for Ultra High Frequency (UHF), Extremely High Frequency (EHF), and Global Broadcast Service (GBS) communications, providing fleet broadcast to all Navy ships and command control networks for selected aircraft, ships and submarines. Following today’s launch and one scheduled for the Spring of 1999, the UHF Follow-On constellation will consist of eight modified 39-channel Hughes HS-601 satellites and one in-orbit spare. The UHF Follow-On satellites replace the Fleet Satellite Communications (FLTSATCOM) and the Hughes-built LeaSat spacecraft currently supporting the Navy's global communications network, serving ships at sea and a variety of other U.S. military fixed and mobile terminals. They are compatible with ground and sea-based terminals already in service.

For more information contact:
Richard Williamson in the Public Affairs and Corporate Communications Office of the Space & Naval Warfare Systems Command at 619-524-3432 (http://www.spawar.navy.mil)
Hughes Space and Communications Company: Communications and Customer Relations: (310) 364-6363
Lockheed Martin: Julie Andrews at International Launch Services - 619-645-6400 (San Diego Headquarters) or 407-730-5300/5305 (Cape Canaveral)
U.S. Air Force Space Command's 45th Space Wing Office of Public Affairs: Lt. Col. John Martin at 407-494-5933 (http://www.pafb.af.mil/)

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